



## *MEMORANDUM*

DATE: November 13, 2012

TO: City Council

FROM: Brad Smith, Chair, Bellevue Arts Commission

SUBJECT: Comments on Budget Proposal for the Arts Program

The Arts Commission is grateful for this opportunity to share its observations on the proposed Operating Budget for 2013-14 supporting the Arts Program. The proposed Operating Budget includes a reduction of \$10,000 in the funds available to support the work of artists and arts groups serving Bellevue. The amount represents an ongoing decrease of about a 9% annually.

The Commission is undertaking two key activities to inform a discussion on how the budget proposal supports or hinders the community's ability to benefit from the work of artists and arts groups. The activities are a general meeting with artists and arts groups and a cultural demographic survey.

On Thursday, November 1<sup>st</sup> Arts Commissioners met with members of the arts community to update them on the City's proposed budget and to find out how they are faring. Twenty four people representing seventeen arts organizations and presenters serving Bellevue attended. Two more sent written comments. We asked four questions:

1. To our Eastside Arts Partnerships recipients representing our core groups: How would your organization deal with the loss of about 10% of the funding you receive from the City of Bellevue?
2. To Special Projects applicants who have received funding in the past: would you continue to present your program in Bellevue if funds were decreased?
3. To all potential applicants for Special Projects: Would you consider applying if you knew the amount of funding was decreased from previous years?
4. For all: How would you characterize the level of service you provided Bellevue residents as our funding amounts have changed since 2009? Think of services in terms of number of programs provided in Bellevue and the number of Bellevue residents attending your events/classes/shows. Have they increased, decreased or stayed about the same?

Information generated at this meeting is being compiled into a report summarizing their responses and key themes, which Arts Commission chair Bradley Smith will present to Council this evening.

The Commission is launching a cultural demographic survey to identify local artists and cultural practitioners representing Bellevue's diverse cultures. The purpose is to find out who they are, what they do, the unique challenges they face, and how the City might support their efforts. In this effort we are partnering with the Parks & Community Services Department. Information from this survey

will help inform the work underway on the City's Cultural Diversity Plan as well as the *Cultural Compass* update.

Over time, our conversations with artists and arts groups have left us with strong respect for the work they do. We look forward to talking with you about how to ensure that Bellevue continues to benefit from their dedicated work.